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The Need for Socialism

The Futility of Reforms

Politics appears to be about reforms. All the main political parties offer reforms to this or that problem. And in some ways capitalism can be reformed. It can abolish hereditary peers, extend drinking hours and give police greater powers.

However, capitalism cannot be reformed in a very important political way. Capitalism cannot be reformed to meet the needs and aspirations of the working class. The problems capitalism causes to the working class - poverty, alienation, unemployment, war and never having enough to live decent lives: these cannot be reformed away. Reforms under capitalism have their limits, and the limits are drawn around the wages system and private property ownership of the means of production.

Where reforms have been enacted to educate workers or provide health care, they have not been intended to give workers the best education and the best health service but to ensure that working class children are fit for purpose in a working life of exploitation, and that ill or injured workers are repaired and returned to work, all at the lowest possible cost for the capitalist class.

Capitalism does not exist to provide workers with what they need to live. The efficient operation of capitalism requires only that workers should not come onto the labour market in what Marx called "*a crippled state*". The wages system of class exploitation is a form of rationing which keeps workers bordering on necessity, with grinding poverty - with or without State benefits - as a coercive force driving them into employment. Owning the means of production the capitalist class are in command. It is their class system and they live well off it.

The reality of capitalism puts severe limits on what capitalist politicians can and cannot do. And what capitalist politicians cannot do is wear two hats. Their function is to administer the profit system in the interest of the capitalist class. This means they have to remain indifferent or hostile to the interest of the working class. In this respect capitalism can never meet the needs of the working class, and reforms which pretend otherwise - like sustained full employment - are an illusion.

The Need for Socialism

Workers must first understand that capitalism is the cause of their problems - problems which capitalist politicians cannot solve. While the capitalist class own the means of production workers will always get second best. Capitalism has the potential to meet the needs of all society but the profit motive dictates that production only takes place if

there are buyers who can pay.

Capitalism has solved how to produce, but the class system prevents enough from being produced and distributed according to need.

Capitalism only enables the rich to live a life of luxury. Capitalism is their system and politicians exist to look after their interest. While the capitalist class own the means of production, the workers will remain an exploited subject-class of wage-slaves.

What workers need to turn their attention to is Socialism; the common ownership and democratic control of the means of production and distribution by all of society. This is the social framework in which production will take place to meet human need wherever it exists; a world-wide system of social unity.

In Socialism, goods will no longer be produced for sale and profit: they will be produced for use. The guiding principle will be "*from each according to ability, to each according to need*".

The capital-labour relationship will no longer exist. There will be no labour market, no wages system, no class exploitation and no unemployment. By extension, there will be no unemployment. Instead, there will be free and voluntary labour, producing directly for people's needs.

Common ownership and democratic control of the means of production means no classes, no class privilege and no class struggle. Instead of antagonistic class interests over the extent and intensity of exploitation, there will be common interest. There will be disagreement and different options but decisions will be made in the interests of all society, rather than of a minority.

And Socialism will be world-wide. There will not be national divisions, or competition over raw resources, strategic points of influence and trade routes. There will not be war in Socialism because the reasons for war - private property ownership and national interests - will have been removed.

The abolition of unemployment, exploitation, poverty, social alienation and war can take place through conscious political action of a socialist majority. Until then workers will continue not having their needs met, and to live a second-best existence, with "class-slaves" stamped on their heads as they pass from one period of unemployment to the next.

The Socialist Party of Great Britain will not barter its independence for promises of reform. For, no matter whether these promises are made sincerely or not, we know that the immediate need of our class is emancipation, which can only be achieved through the establishment of Socialism.

QUESTIONS OF THE DAY, 1953 edition, p 14

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Thinking *Outside* the (Capitalist) Box

The reason given by economists and politicians for asserting that there is no alternative to capitalism is their unquestioning belief in features of capitalism such as private property ownership, employers, and commodity production and exchange for profit, as reflected in the subject matter of academic economics.

Economics was defined by Sir Lionel Robbins as "*the science which studies human behaviour as a relationship between ends and scarce means which have alternative uses*" (THE NATURE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF ECONOMIC SCIENCE, 1932).

But, if "*science*" entails checking theory against reality and "*studies*" means attention to the real world, Robbins's definition of economics does not pass his own test. It is merely a set of ideas and beliefs justifying capitalism.

Take scarcity. In Socialism, there will be some scarce materials. That is not in itself a problem. It means that Socialist society would have to democratically prioritise what it did with such scarce resources, and how they would be used would be carefully considered. That said, there would not be the waste and inefficiency currently found under capitalism. Finite reserves of oil would not be used to produce weapons, or used in war. Free and voluntary social labour would not be wasted in finance or state bureaucracies, etc. Generally, production in Socialism will ensure an abundance of goods and social labour, to meet the needs of all society.

Scarcity in capitalism is not natural but is manufactured. In capitalist production, vast resources are not used because it is not profitable to use them, even when there is a desperate social need. This applies to housing, food, and social labour. Resources exist to build adequate housing but if there is no profit in constructing them they will not be built, with developers building up land banks portfolios even though there is real need.

That profit comes before human need can be seen in economic crises. During the last depression, there were stockpiles of bricks, cement and timber along with many unemployed construction workers: materials and labour all unused, not because of scarcity, but because it was not profitable to use them. Agricultural land was also taken out of use, with fruit and vegetables destroyed, and farmers paid not to produce.

So the economics that supports private property ownership, employers, the profit motive, and the mantra "*There is no alternative*": this economics is a capitalist view of the world; a view of class power, privilege and wealth.

What workers should be doing is thinking outside the capitalist box in which they are constrained; mentally and physically. They should be seeking alternatives that accord with their own class interests, and their interests alone. There is a real practical alternative to world capitalism: World Socialism.

In World Socialism the means of production would be owned and democratically controlled by all of society in common. Production would take place to meet human need, not for profit. There would be no classes, no wages system and no exploitation.

Will capitalism last forever, as its supporters claim? Is the squalor, the poverty, the human degradation and joylessness we see around us the final pinnacle of social evolution? No social system lasts forever, so why should capitalism be the exception? Primitive Communism, the slave societies of Greece and Rome, feudalism - these have all come and gone. Social systems and social relations change.

What is so special about capitalism that its adherents believe it will last forever? Why will it buck the historical trend?

The belief - or better still the wishful thinking - that capitalism will last forever is preposterous. And there is a very good Marxist reason why:-

The World's Working Class

Not the '*working class*' of the capitalist left with their cloth caps and estuary English. Not the '*working class*' found in dry sociological text books. But the working class majority: all who are forced to sell their ability to work for a wage or a salary. The working class also includes the self-employed who work for a commission or for many bosses. This is the working class addressed by Marx and the Socialist Party of Great Britain.

The abolition of classes is possible only where the capitalist relations of production have raised the productivity of labour to a point where scarcity can be abolished.

We have long since passed through this point. The 20 million unemployed workers in the EU countries are just one example of the failure of capitalism to meet the needs of all society. So too is the destruction which takes place in trade depressions; the stock-piling of unsold commodities, and the deliberate cutting back of production in the face of lower, or non-existent, profit expectations.

The relations of production - the capital-labour relationship - continues, year by year, to act as a fetter on the productive forces. There is nothing capitalists or their politicians can do about this tendency. And it is this tendency

which deepens the class struggle.

But there is more to it than that. Capitalism generates a powerful social force within the forces of production itself. And that force is the working class.

Of course, the class struggle is not smooth. Marx made this point in the COMMUNIST MANIFESTO where he said that the working class would experiences ups and downs.

But unlike the Roman proletariat, in capitalism the working class has developed from an incoherent mass to a sophisticated class running capitalism from top to bottom. Some workers have seen that capitalism cannot be run in their interests, becoming Socialists and establishing a political party, the SPGB. No oppressed group in any previous social system went that far to act in its own interests; not even the capitalist class who were so dependent on the working class support in the struggle against feudalism. The working class has come far. And it is a positive development. Yet a few Socialists spread across the planet are not enough. There has to be a Socialist majority. Socialism and the establishment of Socialism depend on the conscious political activity of a working-class majority throughout the world. Only then can world capitalism be replaced by World Socialism.

This idea of the self-emancipation of the working class is central to Marx's political thought as a socialist revolutionary.

Marx's conclusion that the working class has to abolish the wages system, and his insistence that the establishment of Socialism had to be the work of the working class itself, without leaders: these are two of the most important political ideas of the last two hundred years.

In reaching these conclusions, Marx had identified the world working class as capitalism's gravediggers. That is the Socialist reply to those who believe capitalism will last forever.

Labour's Failed Reforms

The Labour Government promised to halve child poverty by 2010 and eradicate it by 2020 The Government claim they cannot afford the £4bn necessary to keep pumping tax credits into this reform. The latest child poverty figures, published in March 2007, show that child poverty actually rose between 2004-05 and 2005-06 (times, 29 October 2007).

Poverty under capitalism cannot be abolished through reforms but only by the establishment of common ownership and democratic control of the means of production and distribution by all of society.

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The Postal Strike

At great inconvenience and hardship to themselves and their families, postal workers recently took strike action to protect their jobs, to protect pensions and for more pay. Royal Mail and the CWU are at odds over pay and pensions. Royal Mail offered a 2.5 per cent, one-year, pay increase. The CWU wanted to bring postal workers' pay into line with the national average wage of £395 a week within five years - a rise of 27 per cent. Royal Mail also wanted to end the final-salary pension scheme for all employees. This move was threatening to provoke additional strikes from its managers.

Politicians and the media blamed the unions and told them that they are not living in the real world. They stand accused of being short-sighted and selfish.

Gordon Brown said, at Prime Minister's Question Time (TIMES, 11 October 2007), that "*there was no justification*

for carrying on the strike", although with all his perks and salary he knows little of having to live on a pittance. And John Hutton, the Labour Minister, said: "*the Government was on the side of the taxpayers who were the owners of the postal group*" (TIMES, 11 October 2007), which meant being on the side of the capitalist class on whose shoulders the burden of taxation falls.

The media misleadingly labelled the working patterns of the Post Office workers as "*Spanish practices*" but this turned out to be employers' propaganda, with the Royal Mail admitting that "*none of the practices was endemic*". This still did not deter the DAILY MAIL from uncritically publishing these fictions as though they were fact.

There are those on the Left who blame the "*fat-cat*" management, and politicians who have steered a course towards "*modernisation*" or privatisation. They support the Post Office workers in the claim that they provide a service, enshrined in nationalisation, which is being threatened by the profit motive. Writing in WORKER'S LIBERTY in a personal capacity, Peter Keenlyside - of the Communication Workers' Union Executive - stated (12 July 2007): *For the CWU this is about keeping a publicly owned, publicly run concern that provides a universal letters service to everyone in the UK.*

Of course postal workers want to work within a service that meets people's needs. But they will not be able to do so under capitalism, where the means of production are owned by a parasitical minority - a system whose objective is profit, not meeting human need. Throughout the 20th century, nationalised industries have behaved in exactly the same way towards their workers as those in the private sector.

And workers should not get caught up in the arid ideological debates about privatisation and nationalisation, any more than they should take sides between protectionists and free marketers. Nationalisation and privatisation are not socialist and capitalist alternatives. They are all about the conflicting and changing interests of the capitalist class and their politicians.

Privatisation of the Royal Mail was looked at favourably by John Major's government who saw the state subsidies underpinning the 350-year postal system as unsustainable for the capitalist class. John Major wanted to privatise the Royal Mail and open it up to competition, but ran into difficulties when others in his Government disagreed with the proposed policy, seeing it as being as flawed as the privatisation of the railways.

Recognising the unsustainable burden of subsidies, the Labour Government thought of privatising the Royal Mail in 1998. Nationalisation was no longer misleadingly linked to Socialism while privatisation was no longer seen as a purely capitalist policy. When the Tory Party threatened the railways with nationalisation in the early 19th century or nationalised the BBC, these actions had nothing to do with Socialism, any more than the nationalisation of the mines by the 1948 Labour Government had anything to do with common ownership and democratic control of the means of production and distribution.

Blair's Labour Government made the Post Office into an independent company with only one shareholder, the Government. Over recent years the Post Office has been opened up to greater competition, resulting in the closing of 4,600 post offices and the reduction of services. More post offices are to be closed, and weekend deliveries are also to be cut.

The Communication Workers' Union asks people to write to their local MPs in support of the postal workers. That is a waste of time. All MPs support capitalism and fall behind their respective parties. Most MPs - especially including government ministers - want further 'modernisation', which is another word for flexible labour and less of it. Mr Keenlyside stated that the CWU have "*recently decided to have a push on fighting for our policies in the Labour Party*".

It would be more to the point if the CWU stopped giving its support to the Labour Party and actually started to understand the social system in which their members are exploited. Capitalism is not about meeting people's needs but about producing commodities for exchange and, above all, for profit. The capitalist class have social power because they own the means of production, protected by the machinery of government. And workers have nothing but their ability to work which they have to sell for a wage and then are exploited in the productive process.

The future for the CWU and its members looks bleak. Although they have secured a pay rise of 6.9% over 18 months, that will still not stop the redundancies or post office closures. They will not be able to halt the privatisation of the Royal Mail nor will they be able to insulate their members from the introduction of new technology, 'flexible' labour practices, and competition. Marx showed, for example, that capitalists have to introduce labour-saving machinery when their competitors have already done the same. If competitors are taking a quicker time to do the same job, for less money and with fewer workers, then this pressure will be felt by post office workers. Long strikes do not augur well for trade unions: the most successful strikes occur under favourable conditions for the trade union in question, not when they are confronting an intransigent employer backed by the government.

The problems associated with the CWU in Britain raises the question about the future of unions. On the industrial field, when conditions are right, they can increase their pay and working conditions, but current gains can be future losses. At present, mistakenly, the unions mostly support the Labour Party, supply it with finance and fund Labour MPs, and so are, in this respect, utterly useless to workers. But, with a little understanding of capitalism and as organisations where Marxian ideas could be discussed and disseminated, there is no reason why the trade unions should not continue to be valuable centres of resistance in the economic sphere of the class struggle.

The problem with trade unions is that they work within a fragmented labour market where workers are in competition with each other. Trade unions have severe limitations imposed upon them in the class struggle. Long strikes wear down members and their families, and lose the support of other workers - particularly if inconvenienced. Trade unions cannot do anything about the advantage that owning the means of production gives to employers supported by their political agents and the State. Trade depressions also have a negative effect on trade unions.

The class struggle continues under capitalism because the interests of the workers and employers cannot be reconciled. Only the establishment of Socialism can end the class struggle.

The Socialist Party of Great Britain is organised for the freedom of the working class from capitalist exploitation, and we argue that class solidarity is an absolute necessity. Socialists work for the abolition of the wages system, not its retention. Politically, this means that workers - no matter where they live or work - have a single uniting interest which involves gaining political power and replacing capitalism with Socialism. The political class struggle leaves no room for sectional conflict between workers. Until workers become socialists and establish socialism, their lives will continue to be stamped with the post-mark: "*second class*".

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War and the Working Class

It is incredible to realise but it is now 71 years ago, in August 1936, that the SPGB produced a superb pamphlet with this title, arguing the Socialist answer to war. The concluding words were:

SOCIALISM MUST BECOME THE SINGLE AIM OF
A POLITICALLY ORGANISED WORKING CLASS.
THEN CAPITALISM AND WAR WILL BE NO MORE.

In the Socialist Party of Great Britain, we today still hold tenaciously to *the Single Aim of **Socialism***. Others have added further "*meanwhile*" objectives, and become part of the problem by being opportunist, and so pushing Socialism back to an ultimate aim, which of course, means no aim at all. The one thing that damns the ideas and actions of the opportunists with their "*meanwhile*" objectives is that they are left with capitalism which repeatedly throws up all the problems and contradictions against which they pit themselves. If they had had the understanding to go straight for *the Single Aim*, the job would long since have been done.

Whilst we have to deal with the present world situation, if the Labour Party had not supported every war since it came into existence in 1906, and had the so-called Communist Party and assorted leftists not used their religious attachment to Soviet state-capitalism to divert workers away from their real interest, the 'present situation' could have

been quite different. Nationalism is divisive: what is needed is unity, based on a mutual acceptance by workers that their interest is the same world-wide.

One thing is certain: there can be no wars without the working class. So, ending war must begin with them. Conflicts will continue as long as workers are prepared to kill each other to enable their rulers, the capitalist class, to plunder the earth's resources for profits.

It is absurd, but we are regularly told at our Hyde Park meetings, that in more than one hundred years, we have made little progress. This is surely the case of the shoe being on the wrong foot. It is the majority of workers who are gullibly persuaded by the capitalist mind-poisoning media, to behave against their own interest, and support capitalism.

Socialists in opposing war have been told over many years: "*If the country's good enough to live in - it's good enough to fight for*". This ignorant piece of nonsense has been endlessly repeated, despite the fact that between the end of World War One and the start of World War Two, there was never less than one million unemployed, and poverty, insecurity and housing misery have remained the lot of millions of workers to the present day.

Today, British workers (among many others) in armed forces in Afghanistan and Iraq are frequently being reported killed. Their names are read out on television news, and their parents often make various sad comments. Frequently clips are shown of those killed, with their guns in action against "*insurgents*" or "*extremists*" or the "*Taliban*", and we are told that numbers of those were also killed. They never seem to have any names, and no parents or loved ones. It is hard to think of an insurgent or extremist loving someone or being loved.

The argument that, if everyone was like Socialists, the Germans would have come here in 1939, can have no relevance to Afghanistan or Iraq which are blatantly wars waged to plunder oil and gas resources. America has bombed 30 countries since 1945 with no fear of invasion from any of them.

The argument concerning Germany can be shown to be equally spurious. It fails to face the fact that ideas do not exist in isolation. The evidence is that German workers, like the French, American, British, Japanese and the rest, did think alike. Wrongly, they all embraced nationalism; they all waved their masters' flags, and failed to see their common interests as workers. The evidence strongly suggests that if the majority of workers in Britain, millions of them, had rejected nationalism and embraced Socialism, workers in Germany and other countries would have been doing the same.

Whose country?

It is nearly 160 years since Marx and Engels published The COMMUNIST MANIFESTO, and by 1939 it was nearly 100 years old. In that outstanding document, Marx and Engels said:

Communists might possibly be reproached with desiring to abolish countries and nationalities. The working men have no country. We cannot take away from them what they have not got.

The concluding lines of the MANIFESTO read:

*The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win.
Working men of all countries, unite!*

It is fantastic to reflect on the fact that Marx helped found The International Workingmen's Association, in 1864. Where is internationalism today? The massive growth of the capitalist propaganda media has used compulsory mis-education to poison young minds with nationalism and religion, and to sustain adult indoctrination through mass-circulating "news"-papers, radio and television. Also, the Leftist Trots and others have hijacked a form of pretentious internationalism, with reformism and day-to-day slogans, aimed at solving the problems of capitalism while retaining the system.

Where today, is the recognition contained in Marx's 1864 Preamble to the First International Address?

This included the following:

That the emancipation of the working classes must be conquered by the working classes themselves...

[NB See Clause 5 of our DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES.]

Also, in the *Preamble*, it was stated:

... that the economical subjection of the man of labour to the monopoliser of the means of labour, that is, the sources of life, lies at the bottom of servitude in all its forms, of all social misery, mental degradation, and political dependence;

That the economical emancipation of the working classes is therefore the great end to which every political movement ought to be subordinate as a means;...

The profundity of these remarks, and their relevance to today's world, can hardly be exaggerated. These Socialist sentiments are only to be found in the DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES of the Socialist Party of Great Britain.

No worker's blood

There is *no* working class blood on the hands of the SPGB, unlike those of the Labour Party and the so-called Communist Parties. The SPGB is not just opposed to this or that war, nor simply opposed to the United States side. Neither has this Party opposed war in peace-time only to support it when war starts.

It was damned dangerous to oppose war from 1914 to 1918, but the SPGB issued a front page statement saying:
... **that no interests are at stake justifying the shedding of a single drop of working class blood...**

The Party saw German capitalist encroachment on the markets of British capitalism as *not* a workers' issue! While workers in this and other countries see capitalist class interests as their own, they will be prepared to kill other workers, for capitalist interests, against their own interests and those of their fellow workers elsewhere.

On August 20, ITV screened a film by John Pilger. In dealing with the USA's colonising of Latin American republics, he interviewed a leading CIA figure who frankly admitted that it was oil and gas that the US sought to grab, and openly stated that the US would use any force necessary anywhere for such American interests. He could only make such a statement if he knew he could count on American workers' willingness to produce and drop the bombs, and use all other weapons of war-making.

Without that willingness on the part of the workers, war would be impossible. The question is, on what possible grounds would workers not be willing to kill each other?

The question is of particular relevance to the Stop The War Coalition and their Leftist supporters who condemn the war in Iraq as "*illegal*" because the United Nations was not behind it. The legality of wars, like the plunder that is gained from them, is a matter for the capitalist class. Workers will only withdraw their support for wars when they become class conscious: they must reject their rulers' ideology and see the world's workers as their fellow Socialists.

Certainly, a minority will oppose a particular war as "*unjust*" but class-consciousness is the only answer to war. This makes Socialist activity and awareness the issue of the greatest importance in world society today. War, vile in every detail as it is, is not the most extreme degradation to which workers are subject. The 'ordinary' everyday world of the labour-market, selling themselves for wages all their working lives, is the ultimate degradation. As wage-slaves, workers consider themselves lucky to be exploited and get a monthly wage.

Independent Capitalism

In August 2007, India and Pakistan "*celebrated*" 60 years of independence from British capitalism. Right at the start in 1947, as the sub-continent divided into two nations, one million people were killed. 30 of those years of independence in Pakistan have been spent under military rule. What has been gained for the workers? Extreme poverty is still wide-spread in both countries; it co-exists with religious ignorance, as it has done for many centuries.

These are stark examples that show again that nationalism is the ideology of the capitalists; but workers should be concerned with emancipation and Socialism.

War on Newsnight

The BBC2 programme, NEWSNIGHT, on 6 September 2007, devoted the whole fifty minutes to discussing war and the condition of Britain's military machine. Gavin Esler was in the chair and a panel consisting of a leading spokesman for the War Office (now called the Ministry of Defence), his Tory opposite number, a recently retired military commander, Sir Michael Jackson, and a mother whose son had lost both legs in Afghanistan. They earnestly debated whether the Labour Government had got its military spending programme right.

Were the Army, Navy and Air-force armed and equipped for the war they face today? Are we likely to have the kind of forces equipped and resourced for the wars we will face in the next 20 years? Were those who suffered serious injuries (such as two lost legs) being properly compensated? The mother asked: "*Do British civilians hold the armed forces in as high regard as the Americans do?*"

We are expected to respect workers in state-uniforms who are paid to kill whoever and wherever they are told, and this is done in the interest of a parasite class that exploits them and their own class.

This was the ground covered over fifty minutes. Nobody conceived of a world without armed forces, with no military planning and equipment at all, and no wars. None of them ever glimpsed any alternative to capitalism.

The Profit System

As long ago as 1920, a certain Professor Edwin Cannan wrote:

The present organisation of industry is sometimes described as capitalistic, and the term is quite properly applied, if all that is meant by it is that in our part of the world the greater part of industry and property is immediately controlled by persons and institutions whose object is to make a profit on their capital. In Western Europe and America it is certain that the majority of workers work as they are directed to work by persons and bodies of persons who employ them in order to make a profit by getting more than they pay for all expenses., and who reckon the profit as a percentage on their capital. The greater part of the property is also in the hands of such persons and institutions.

Edwin Cannan, WEALTH, quoted in WAR AND THE WORKING CLASS, p9

87 years later, THE SUNDAY TIMES (among others), publishes a mass of figures which show the same concentration of wealth still exists, welfare-reforms notwithstanding.

Another rare piece of truth from a capitalist politician came from a former Conservative Home Secretary, Sir William Joynson-Hicks, when he said:

I know it is said at Missionary meetings that we conquered India to raise the level of the Indians. That is cant. We conquered India as the outlet for the goods of Great Britain. We conquered India by the sword, and by the sword we should hold it.

DAILY NEWS, 17 October 1925, quoted in the same pamphlet, p.11

Workers should remember such frank utterances by their rulers when they are being asked to go to war for capitalism. Capitalist hypocrisy being what it is, when Germany, Italy and Japan began conquering "*by the sword*", we had World War Two. Capitalism as a system of plunder cannot control the number of plunderers.

News Comes and Goes

A brief report on BBC 2 NEWS (18 September 2007) referred to Israeli planes bombing Syria. It was claimed by America that North Korea was "*out-sourcing*" its nuclear weapons programme to Syria. An American official, Mike

Powell, was asked by BBC NEWS if Israel should be taken to task. Powell replied that: "*Israel does not have to answer to anyone*". A parallel was drawn with the Nazi bombing of Poland but Powell was adamant. It is apparent that Israel, which uses US bomber planes and British bombs, is America's agent in the Middle East. There has been talk of a Bush attack on Syria and Iran for a year or two but, with chaos in Iraq, it is a political mine-field for Bush, so the US "*out-sources*" its military power to Israel. There seems to have been no further BBC coverage!

On Monday 8 October, the Stop The War Coalition organised a protest rally in Trafalgar Square. About a dozen speakers took turns to harangue a slogan-chanting crowd of no more than 4000, if that. "*Stop the War*", "*Get the troops out now!*" was repeated scores of times. This rabble rousing is typical of protest rallies: no idea why troops exist, nor any aspiration to a world without troops, just the piecemeal dealing with the effects of capitalism. Nationalism was much in evidence. The question of what the role of Britain and America should be was "*discussed*" and set against the Palestinian demand for land and "*freedom*" from Israel. Conflicting demands for "*Israel for the Israelis*" and "*Palestine for the Palestinians*" were reminiscent of Mosley's National Front days with the slogan "*Britain for the British*", or pre-war Nazi Germany's demand for a strong Germany with colonies.

All this absurd nationalism is anti-working class and anti-Socialist. Remember Marx:: "*workers have no country!*".

Carved in Blood

BBC NEWS (11 October) gave details of a new eyesore on the Staffordshire landscape, a memorial to 16,000 UK servicemen - workers killed since 1945. They were killed while killing, or helping to kill, others in various parts of the world. The Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams, solemnly led prayers for "*those who risked their lives for the country and the world*". In fact, a criminal squandering of young lives for capitalism and profits. The 16,000 names were carved in stone, unlike those of the men, women and children in places like Korea, Kosovo, Vietnam, Serbia, Malaya, Iraq and Afghanistan, to name just some of the places where capitalist militarism has killed people whose numbers run into millions. A grasp of Socialist ideas would have prevented all of this. Instead, the killing continues.

The same day, two more car-bombs killed 18 people in Iraq, and in Pakistan dozens of soldiers' throats were cut, after fighting with Islamic militants near the Afghan border. It also emerged that in Iraq the US employs a private security company called Blackwater; they deliberately killed 17 civilians including women and children, and injured 20 more. Accused by the Iraqi government, they are immune from prosecution in "liberated" Iraq but the FBI said trials in America are possible (9 October 2007, ITV, TELETXT report only, but not on the visual TV news).

Three days later, Putin was warning US officials to back-off on their plans to install missiles in Eastern Europe.

Such is the insanity with which capitalism threatens the world's workers in the 21st century. Time surely to unite and bring in Socialism.

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Unemployment *and* Profit Before People

Unemployment: A Measure of Capitalism's Failure

In the 19 OECD countries in June 2007, there were 12,697,579 unemployed workers (OECD statistics, 2007). These unemployed workers represent a huge waste of resources but, under commodity production and exchange for profit, it is unprofitable to employ them.

Marx pointed out that, as capitalism develops, there is a constant conflict and contradiction between the forces of production, including workers, and the social relations of production. Under capitalism, the means of production are owned by the capitalist class.

Workers are forced into employment, and into unemployment when it is not profitable to employ them. What the workers produce belongs to the capitalist class. And what the wages system rations workers to bears no resemblance to their real needs.

If there was common ownership and democratic control of the means of production, then the 12 million or so unemployed workers would be producing useful things to meet social need. And in Socialism there would be no capital-wage labour relationship, and no employment or unemployment. There would be no wages system in Socialism. Voluntary labour would engage in work required to meet the needs of all society.

Profit Before People

Two million workers die each year due to accidents and illness caused by workplace-related hazards, including chemicals, accidents and stress, the International Labor Organisation reports (July 2002).

The annual toll includes 12,000 children, according to the report issued for the annual World Congress on Occupational Safety & Health at Work. Agriculture, which employs more than half the world's workers, claims more than 50% of occupational fatalities, injuries and diseases. Construction, logging, fishing and mining are also among the most hazardous industries. Since 1990, the overall toll has risen, not fallen.

The biggest killer in the workplace is cancer, causing about 640,000 or 32% of deaths. It is followed by circulatory diseases (23%), accidents (19%), communicable diseases (17%) and respiratory diseases (7%). Hazardous substances kill 340,000 workers each year, with asbestos alone claiming about 100,000 lives.

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Capitalism's Failures *and* Russia's Sham 'Election'

The Failure of World Capitalism

The failure of world capitalism is periodically demonstrated when trans-governmental organisations like the World Bank publish a review of poverty affecting billions of workers' lives across the planet. These salient statistics are taken from the World Bank's WORLD DEVELOPMENT INDICATORS for 2007:

- * Inequality has increased in many countries, with or without growth (p 4).*
- * In developing countries, each year, more than 10 million children die before the age of five from preventable diseases (p.5).*
- * More than a billion people in developing capitalist countries lack access to an adequately protected source of water (p 10).*

One factor relating to poverty - the real cause of poverty - is totally excluded from the World's Bank Report, and that is the poverty caused to the world's working class by not owning the means of production. It is because the means of production are privately owned, and production takes place for profit not need, that poverty persists from one generation to the next.

And the World Bank is part of the problem not the solution. It believes that free trade and free markets will eradicate poverty. Yet its own report shows this to be a fallacy. Only Socialism, that is, common ownership and democratic control of the world's resources by all of society, will end poverty and create a world based on the principle: "*from each according to ability, to each according to need*".

Russia's Sham 'Election', November 2007

In a sham 'democratic election', Russian workers go obediently to vote as they have been directed to - for a continuance of Putin's rule. Opponents (those not yet in exile or murdered) are denied access to the media; are decreed ineligible to stand and, when they hold demonstrations, are beaten up and arrested by Putin's thuggish police. This sham 'election' tells us that Russia is again ruled as an authoritarian dictatorship. As Orwell noted in NINETEEN EIGHTY-FOUR, such regimes need external enemies. When Putin whips up nationalism by portraying the West as Russia's enemies, that means more votes for his United Russia party. After leaving Nazi Germany, Bertolt Brecht wrote of such 'sham elections' in his play, FEAR AND MISERY OF THE THIRD REICH::

Behold several million electors,
One hundred per cent in all sectors,
Have asked to be led by the nose.
They didn't get real bread and butter,
They didn't get warm coats or fodder,
They did get the leader they chose.

MORAL: Only sheep need leaders - workers should act in their own interest.

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Pensions, Strikes and 'Reforms'

In France and Germany, where many workers are currently on strike, capitalists are apparently shocked to the core. They seem to live in a dream world: one where they can impose whatever terms and conditions they like, can require ever greater productivity and 'flexibility', can treat these indispensable people, the workers, with harsh contempt, and yet be amazed and dismayed when these workers put their feet down, saying *No* to their 'reforms'. The dream of the capitalist, of every employer, of every government, is to have a workforce which is utterly docile, obedient, servile.

To some extent, in the United States and increasingly in Britain, workers have been deprived by employers and governments of the power to organise effectively in trade unions. British governments since the 1980s, have imposed legal sanctions making it hard for unions to take strike action, banning any form of sympathetic action. In 1997, Blair inherited the Thatcher anti-union 'reforms', and declared that to him they seemed to be simply "*commonsense*". That marked New Labour's break with 'Old' Labour. Where 'Old' Labour had prided itself on being the voice of the trade unions, and had accepted the unions' bloc votes at Labour Party conferences, 'New' Labour only accepted the unions' money.

At the same time, there were other trends which made it harder for workers to insist on the old terms and conditions. More and more workers are forced to work as 'temps', on short-term contracts: 'lump' labour and agency work is more and more common. More clerical and professional workers now work from home, as self-employed 'consultants'. (That makes them responsible for their own pension arrangements and also means they must pay the office overheads - heating and lighting costs etc.) Also, large numbers of migrant workers from Eastern Europe have been pouring into Britain and other EU countries. Ireland, for instance, has received a large number of Polish migrant workers - much to the relief of the Roman Catholic churches whose Irish congregations had been dwindling. In Britain, there is evidence that this sudden increase in the labour force is putting downward pressure on wages, especially for unskilled workers.

Employers in Britain have been looking for any ways they can find to get out of contributing to the state National Insurance scheme. More and more companies, especially long-established ones with a large workforce, have closed down their company pension schemes, ruthlessly putting profits first. This has left many workers stranded, without the pensions they had contributed to over many decades. So now, when unions negotiate with employers, the pension question is regularly an important part of the deal to be negotiated. Clearly the unions are on the defensive, and so strikes are relatively infrequent. Following the Japanese example, more and more firms have imposed 'no-strike' agreements.

Following the US example, there are even firms which refuse to recognise trade union representation. Unions have taken to offering 'partnership' training services to employers, i.e. as a function of their 'Human Resources' departments.

In the public sector strikes in France, the transport sector has been the most resolute. While other workers came out on strike over various issues (the teachers, doctors and other public sector workers over pay, the magistrates about Sarkozy's 'judicial reform'), train drivers struck, resisting changes to their pension and retirement age deals. By the second week, the percentage of the workforce remaining out on strike was falling, according to THE ECONOMIST:

Each day, the strike turnout has dropped: from 61% of all rail staff on day one, for example, to 23% by day eight. Yet among train drivers, it remains extremely high: at mid-week, 90% of those who drive the Paris suburban RER trains were still on strike (24 November 2007).

Socialists have long argued that successful strikes are likely to be settled fast. An employer with a full order book will do a deal to keep production going, but one who is facing difficult trading conditions, with falling demand and unsold stock, is likely to dig his heels in. In the case of public sector workers, in some conditions governments may be willing to settle quickly. But if a strike goes on for more than a few days, it is probably a sign that the government is determined to 'take the unions on' and reckons it can beat them. In the 1980s, Scargill and the NUM learnt this the hard way.

When similar strikes took place in France 12 years ago, on the same issue - the government's intention to 'reform', i.e. get rid of, the special pension deal for public sector workers, the striking workers had popular support and the government caved in. However, Sarkozy is newly elected with a mandate to 'modernise' France. And there is a sense among other members of the working class that these special pension rights are unfair: why should train drivers retire so much earlier than other workers? Add to that, the problems faced by workers trying to commute in bad weather without public transport. With public opinion moving against them, the unions involved may well be pushed to do a deal with Sarkozy, probably on the lines of better pay but worse pensions.

The issue at stake is an important one. Requiring workers to postpone retirement is similar to lengthening the working day. Workers then have less leisure and, over the course of their lifetime, employers have more surplus value from each worker.

While trade union organisation is important, it is also important to note that, even when workers gain a victory, it can only be temporary:

Now and then the workers are victorious, but only for a while. The real fruit of their battles lies, not in the immediate result, but in the ever expanding union of the workers.

COMMUNIST MANIFESTO

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Marx: Capital Accumulation and Technological Change

Economists writing about Marx do one of two things; create a straw Marx and attribute to Marx ideas he never held, or take a quotation out of context and twist it to fit a political agenda of their own.

Professor Paul Ormerod commits the latter fallacy. His academic background should warn readers that a considered account of Marx's ideas will be wholly missing from his writings. For several years he was Head of the Economic Assessment Unit at THE ECONOMIST, Director of Economics at the Henley Centre of Forecasting, and a visiting Professor of Economics at London and Manchester universities - a career that carried with it no development in his knowledge of capitalism as it passes from one economic crisis to the next.

Professor Ormerod also writes for *The New Economic Foundation*, a policy institute that informs the New Labour government in its crazy belief that you can have capitalism with "social justice". Marx dismissed this fallacy in *THE POVERTY OF PHILOSOPHY* when he showed, against Proudhon and others, that socialist distribution could not exist simultaneously with capitalist production for profit.

In Professor Ormerod's latest book, *WHY MOST THINGS FAIL - EVOLUTION, EXTINCTION AND ECONOMICS* (2005), he looks at the reason why companies succeed or fail. Professor Ormerod points out that, in 2005, 17,000 companies in Britain went bankrupt, while in the US more than 10 per cent of companies disappear each year.

The factor explaining why these firms went bankrupt, according to Professor Ormerod, is lack of innovation. And it is in this respect he brings Marx into the discussion; not to praise him for his scientific insights into the workings of capitalism but to damn him for being completely wrong.

Karl Marx famously wrote that the motto of capitalists was "Accumulate, accumulate, that is the law of Moses and the Prophets!" As in many other respects, Marx was completely wrong. Innovate, Innovate! - that is the guiding principle which companies have used to try to overcome the inherent and pervasive uncertainty which surrounds all their decisions. It is the best strategy for individual survival, and it is a strategy from which we all, as consumers and citizens, have benefited immensely (p. 240).

Was Marx "completely wrong"? Who better understands what motivates capitalists, Karl Marx or Professor Ormerod? Whose account of capitalism fits the facts, those of Marx or Professor Ormerod?

Marx criticised academic economists like Professor Ormerod for their failure to understand the nature of capital and the total confusion of the issue of political economy.

Marx wrote:

... the more economic theory is perfected, that is, the deeper it penetrates into its subject matter, the more it develops as a contradictory system, the more it is confronted by its own, increasingly independent, vulgar element, enriched with material which it dresses up in its own way until it finally finds its most apt expression in academically syncretic and unprincipled eclectic compilation... Accordingly, vulgar political economy becomes increasingly apologetic and makes strenuous attempts to talk out of existence the ideas which contain those contradictions.

THEORIES OF SURPLUS VALUE, Part III, p. 501

Marx was interested in studying capitalism - that is, commodity production and exchange for profit. He stated in the *Preface* to the first volume of *CAPITAL* that his aim was to lay bare the laws of motion acting on capitalist production. He did so as a committed socialist revolutionary, not as a tame academic providing an ideological fig-leaf to hide naked class interests.

Capital Accumulation and Technological Innovation

A central feature of capitalism's law of motion is capital accumulation. Marx showed that capital accumulation generates innovation and technological change, not the other way around.

In *CAPITAL VOLUME 1*, Marx considered capital accumulation in relation to the individual capitalist. In *Capital* volumes II and III, he considered capital accumulation as a function of the total social capital, in the course of which its contradictions and the consequences of its contradictions are forcibly demonstrated in crisis, bankruptcy, unemployment and social alienation.

Capitalists have to minimise costs and maximise profits. Competition compels them to do so. In the process of competition, employers attempt to increase the extent and intensity of exploitation, and to innovate by introducing new and better machinery.

For Marx, the capitalist is "*personified capital*":

... competition makes the immanent laws of capitalist production to be felt by each individual capitalist, as external

coercive laws... it compels him to keep constantly extending his capital, in order to preserve it, but extend it he cannot, except by progressive accumulation.

CAPITAL VOLUME 1., Chap. 24, p. 592

The pressure of competition means that no capitalist can afford to take it easy. If the productivity of the workers they employ falls, capitalists risk being undercut by competitors, taken over, or going bankrupt.

Innovation by itself explains nothing. It is the threat of competitors that forces employers to exploit their workforce and innovate. Marx says the consequence for the capitalist is "*the restless never-ending process of profit-making alone is what he aims at*" (CAPITAL VOLUME 1, Chap. 4, p.152).

Capitalists, then, are governed by the need to accumulate:

Accumulate, accumulate! That is Moses and the prophets!... Accumulation for the sake of accumulation, production for the sake of production.

CAPITAL VOLUME 1, Chap. 24, p. 595

Note how Professor Ormerod misses out the final part of Marx's statement. Does the learned professor really believe successful capitalists are motivated by innovation, rather than by profit and capital accumulation? The problem with most economists, particularly the theoreticians scribbling away within university departments, is that none have ever actually run a business. In the real world, making a profit is at the top of the capitalist's agenda.

"*We're only in it for the money*", as Frank Zappa reminded the Beatles who were waxing lyrical about "*peace*" and "*love*". Profit is foremost in the mind of the capitalist. It has to be for him to remain a capitalist. And the daily pain faced by a capitalist trying to make a profit is competition. Competition forces the capitalist to accumulate in order to survive:

But does Professor Ormerod understand the generation of surplus value from the exploitation of labour power in the productive process, or that "*capital*" is a social relationship between people rather than a "*thing*"? Is he aware of the difference between "*constant capital*" and "*variable capital*"? No, he is not. The understanding of capitalism provided by Marx is a closed book to him. Yet he quotes Marx on capital accumulation, not knowing what Marx is writing about.

We pity his students at the universities in Manchester and London where he teaches. If he were a professor of medicine, would he be competent to teach medical students, let alone carry out a surgical operation? Unlike surgeons, academic economists run no risk of legal claims of negligence for the consequences of their professorial theories and pronouncements. The reason why this is so is simple. They can and do write any old rubbish but capitalism, regardless of what they write, just goes on from one economic crisis to the next as though they never existed. As one wit noted; economists are paid a great deal of money to advise governments, only for governments to ignore what they have been advised.

Professor Ormerod does not hold with any Labour Theory of Value and does not understand the process of class exploitation in the creation of surplus value, so he cannot explain why or how capital accumulation takes place. He looks at the superficial appearance of capitalism, such as the isolated decisions of boards of directors, and draws the wrong conclusion: that "*innovation*" is the motive of companies, not capital accumulation and the need to make a profit. No meaningful questions are asked by Professor Ormerod, either as to what impels the capitalist to exploit wage labour and accumulate capital, or why they introduce new technology.

Contrary to Professor Ormerod's assertion, Marx's analysis of capital accumulation is inseparably linked to technological change. For Marx, capital accumulation and innovation are interrelated. Capital accumulation not only creates new machinery but also brings in new methods of production and increasing division of labour.

Marx distinguishes the motive of the individual capitalist and the capitalist class as a whole. An individual capitalist tries to increase productivity by replacing *constant capital* (e.g. machinery) by *variable capital* (labour power). His commodity is then produced with smaller amounts of abstract *necessary social labour* than similar commodities produced by his competitors.

Since the value of a commodity is the social average, for a time the innovating capitalist can capture an excess surplus value. However, this is only a temporary gain because competition forces other capitalists to adopt the same methods of production, leading to a lowering of the social value of the commodity and reducing the innovating capitalist's excess surplus value. Capitalists want to increase surplus value, but competition tends to reduce any temporary benefits of innovation.

"Big fish eat little fish"

Capital accumulation also leads to the question of the concentration and centralisation of capital. The technically advanced businesses will tend to make the greatest profits and will have access to greater amounts of capital to invest. They will also be in a better position to innovate and introduce new technology. There is therefore a tendency for larger businesses to get large at the expense of smaller firms who are also prone to bankruptcy. Accumulation of capital leads both to a concentration of capital and a centralisation of capital, as one capitalist "*kills many*".

Marx also showed how capital accumulation creates the conditions for acute contradictions which manifest themselves in periodic trade depressions, bankruptcy and unemployment.

Since the aim of capital is not to minister to certain wants, but to produce profit, and since it accomplishes this purpose by methods which adapt the mass of production to the scale of production, not vice versa, a rift must continually ensue between the limited dimensions of consumption under capitalism and a production which forever tends to exceed this imminent barrier.

CAPITAL, VOLUME III, Chap. 15, p.251

And to put it more bluntly: "The real barrier of capitalist production is capital itself" (Capital Volume III, Chap. 15, p 245) Capitalists are compelled to accumulate capital but the anarchy and contradictions of commodity production and exchange for profit means the periodic curtailments in the use of constant capital.

At such times, on the one hand unused raw materials, idle machinery and finished goods are stock-piled, while on the other .hand, in the form of variable capital, large numbers of the working class are expelled from production into the cold and unpleasant sphere of unemployment and social despair

Marx highlighted the consequences of the anti-social process of capital accumulation in the following passage:
... within the capitalist system all methods for raising the social productivity of labour are put into effect at the cost of the individual worker; that means for the development of production undergo a dialectical inversion so that they become means of domination and exploitation of the producers; they distort the worker into a fragment of a man, they degrade him to the level of an appendage of a machine, they destroy the actual content of his labour by turning it into a torment; they alienate from him the intellectual potentialities of the labour process in the same proportion as science is incorporated in it as an independent power, they deform the conditions under which he works, subject him during the labour process to a despotism the more hateful for its meanness... It follows therefore that in proportion as capital accumulates, the situation of the worker, be his payment high or low, must get worse... Accumulation of wealth at one pole is therefore at the same time accumulation of misery, the torment of labour, slavery, ignorance, brutalisation and mental degradation at the opposite pole, i.e. on the side of the class that produces its own product as capital.

CAPITAL VOLUME 1, Chap. 25, p.604

As to the question of innovation within capitalism, Marx devoted several pages of the third volume of CAPITAL to commenting on the way in which capitalists innovate as a consequence of capital accumulation and competition. He gave the following list of the types of innovations available to the capitalist:

- * Savings on wastage of raw materials;
- * Recycling of waste;
- * Increasing the exploitation of labour-power by an increase in the turn-over of capital through a decrease in the period of production;
- * Increasing the life-span of capital goods by using better materials in the production of machines, and by better

maintenance;

- * Better transport and communications, increasing the turnover of capital;
- * Increasing returns to scale with new capital goods, lowering the amount of capital used per unit of output.

To underscore Marx's superiority over Professor Ormerod, here is a quotation by Marx on innovation - one which was completely missed by the learned professor who picks up quotations like pebbles from a beach, rather than reading the whole coastal line in a comprehensive whole.

The much greater costs that are always involved in an enterprise based on new inventions, compared with later establishments that rise up on its ruins, ex suis ossibus [from its bones]. The extent of this is so great that the pioneering entrepreneurs generally go bankrupt, and it is only their successors who flourish, thanks to their possession of cheaper buildings, machinery etc. Thus it is generally the most worthless and wretched kind of money-capitalists that draw the greatest profit from all new developments of the universal labour of the human spirit and their social application by combined labour.

Capital Volume III, Chap. 5, p. 199

Understanding capitalism and becoming a Socialist is the best strategy for getting rid of the uncertainty generated by commodity production and exchange for profit. The understanding of commodity production and exchange for profit provided by Marx leads to the pressing conclusion: the conscious and political abolition of capitalism by the working class. However, this is not a conclusion likely to be arrived at by an academic economist.

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New Pamphlets

We are pleased to announce the publication of a reprint of THE COMMUNIST MANIFESTO AND THE LAST HUNDRED YEARS (£2), and a new edition of SOCIALISM *VERSUS* RELIGION, WAR, CAPITALISM (£1).

THE COMMUNIST MANIFESTO AND THE LAST HUNDRED YEARS is a facsimile reprint of the SPGB's 1948 pamphlet, first published to mark the centenary of *The Communist Manifesto*, and unfortunately out of print for far too long. Along with the text of *The Communist Manifesto* by Marx and Engels, and Engels's Preface (1888 edition), our pamphlet provides 50 vital pages on Socialist history, from 1848 to 1948. There are sections on the First International (1864); the Paris Commune (1871); the text of the, reformist, Erfurt Programme (1891); the emergence of European and British reformist Social Democratic parties; the SPGB's foundation; SPGB statements on the outbreak of war in 1914 and 1939; the Russian Revolution; the Depression of the 1930s; and a vivid portrayal of postwar conditions in war-ravaged Europe. This is a unique MUST HAVE for all Socialists and for any serious student of Socialist history.

Class struggle - political power - emancipation!

Due to its popularity, our pamphlet SOCIALISM *VERSUS* RELIGION, WAR, CAPITALISM has sold out. In addition to some minor changes to the original text, this second edition includes further elaboration on the fallacious belief-system that is religion, and a new section on *Marx and Religion*. As in the first edition, we have reprinted, in an Appendix, some key passages from the classic SPGB pamphlet, *Socialism and Religion* (first published in 1910 but out of print since 1925). This is an important pamphlet in today's world where so many workers are still trapped in the ignorance, superstition and divisive bigotry of religion

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Bolshevism - From Lenin to Putin

Every generation has had its bogeymen used to frighten the workers, and rally public opinion. In the early 19th century it was Napoleon; more recently it was the Red Peril - the Bolshevik Revolution and its consequences. As

Marx and Engels wrote: "*A spectre is haunting Europe - the spectre of Communism*" (COMMUNIST MANIFESTO).

Perhaps the biggest myth that the Socialist Party of Great Britain has had to waste time dealing with is that of the November 1917 Russian Revolution. A myth is defined in the Oxford Dictionary as a "*purely fictitious narrative*". Myths can be very useful to the unscrupulous. As Hitler wrote in MEIN KAMPF (vol. 1, ch. 10): "*The broad mass of a nation... will more easily fall victim to a big lie than a small one.*"

The Bolshevik myth included a number of false claims which, combined together, do qualify as a really huge lie:

- * That the Russian Revolution of 1917 had brought about a **workers' state**, with Soviets as institutions of workers' control;
- * That Socialism meant **nationalisation** - which even Lenin openly called **State Capitalism**;
- * That '**state Socialism**' was a **transition stage** on the way to full-blown Communism;
- * That workers in advanced countries had to follow the Moscow model;
- * That this was building **Socialism in one country**;
- * That this was a **classless** society, without any unemployment or class struggle;
- * That this **one-party state**, with its censorship, concentration camps, secret police and purges, was in fact the purest form of democracy; and, far from being a dictatorship of the Communist Party leadership, it had to be seen as the '**Dictatorship of the Proletariat**';
- * And, last but by no means least, the world had to believe that this revolution indicated the success of the theory of **Marxism-Leninism**: an incompatible blend of Lenin's vanguardist and elitist Bolshevism, with Marx's completely different theories based on class struggle and class consciousness.

For many workers from then till now, over the last 90 years, Socialism has been confused with nationalisation or 'state capitalism', or worse, with Stalinism. Long after the break up of the Soviet Union, we get that much repeated journalistic *cliché* about the 'collapse of communism'.

Journalists never bother to ask themselves what they mean by Socialism: you will often read an article which refers to Socialism and to Communism on the same page, with the writer having no idea that these words actually do mean something and can be defined.

To many, especially those with knowledge of life in Russia or Eastern Europe, Socialism means Orwell's NINETEEN EIGHTY-FOUR and totalitarian dictatorship. To them, it seems utterly crazy that we call ourselves Socialists and actually advocate Socialism. Such is some of the harm done to the Socialist cause by this Russian Revolution myth.

The Basics of the Socialist Case

Like Marx, Socialists argue the need for **class consciousness**, derived from the factual realities of the class struggle. With this class consciousness would also come **Socialist consciousness**, and from that the development of a democratic, **class organisation**, a political party but not one organised for reform. What we aim for is not just a political revolution, a mere change of regime, but a **social revolution**. To end the wages system and class exploitation requires the abolition of the capitalist class system, which means a revolutionary change in social relationships.

Like Marx and Engels, we argue that this has to be the work of the working class itself. It must be a matter of self-emancipation: a bottom-up revolution, not a top-down one. Marx and Engels saw class struggle as the motor force in history: "*The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles*" (COMMUNIST MANIFESTO). In his preface to the 1888 edition of the COMMUNIST MANIFESTO, Engels wrote:

... our notion, from the very beginning, was that "the emancipation of the working class must be the very act of the working class itself"...

The term 'Marxism-Leninism' is utter nonsense. There can be no common ground between Marxists, who argue in terms of the class struggle, class consciousness and working class self-organisation, and Leninists whose elitist idea

of revolutionary organisation is in terms of a 'vanguard party' leading the ignorant masses.

The SPGB and the 1917 Revolution

Socialist class consciousness is an essential precondition for Socialism but in the Russia of 1917 it was lacking, as the SPGB pointed out in the SOCIALIST STANDARD (August. 1918):

Are the hunters of the North, the struggling peasant-proprietors of the South, the agricultural wage-slaves of the Central Provinces, and the industrial wage-slaves of the towns convinced of the necessity, and equipped with the knowledge requisite, for the establishment of the social ownership of the means of life?

Unless a mental revolution such as the world has never seen before has taken place, or an economic change has occurred immensely more rapidly than history has ever recorded, the answer is 'No!'

Reprinted in SPGB pamphlet, RUSSIA SINCE 1917, p14

In the same article, the SPGB argued that the existence of a large mass of peasants, the vast majority of the population, was in itself a major obstacle to establishing Socialism:

There is no ground whatever for supposing that they [the peasants] are ready or willing to accept social ownership of the land.

In fact, Lenin's regime was very soon at war with the peasants, sending out gangs to requisition grain for the cities, grain which naturally the peasants hid. By early 1920, Lenin was screaming for extreme measures to solve this problem:

It has to be solved by military methods, by absolute ruthlessness, and by the absolute suppression of all other interests. 2 Feb 1920, see Alec Nove,

AN ECONOMIC HISTORY OF THE SOVIET UNION, p77

Clearly the Bolsheviks did not have the support of the peasants, the majority of the population. And the SPGB concluded correctly, from very early on, that whatever it was the Bolsheviks were building or hoping to build in Russia, it simply was not and *could* not be Socialism.

Lenin's theory of revolution

Our party argues that there can be no short-cuts to Socialism, and that intelligent, class-conscious workers do not need leaders.

So we have consistently opposed the vanguard theory. In an article, THE SUPER-OPPORTUNISTS (August 1920), the SPGB argued:

There is no easier road to Socialism than the education of the workers in Socialism and their organisation to establish it by democratic methods.

see Russia since 1917, p 26

This argument was based on the theories of Marx and Engels. Engels pointedly opposed the vanguard theory:

The time of surprise attacks, of revolutions carried through by small conscious minorities at the head of unconscious masses, is past. Where it is a question of a complete transformation of the social organisation, the masses themselves must also be in it, must themselves already have grasped what is at stake, what they are going in for body and soul... But in order that the masses may understand what is to be done, long, persistent work is required...

Preface (1895) to THE CLASS STRUGGLES IN FRANCE

Lenin's vanguard theory was spelt out in his 1902 pamphlet, WHAT IS TO BE DONE? He envisaged a centralised command structure, even using terms like those used in the military: the 'General Staff' were to plan and organise the revolution, working out the strategy and giving orders to the 'rank and file', the masses.

Lenin's idea, largely based on Tkachov, was that the revolution was to be organised by the leadership with an inner circle of leading party members, professional revolutionaries, constituting the 'vanguard'. Later, this view of the

Party as the vanguard organisation, led to the Bolsheviks' one-party dictatorship and their control and dominance of all organisations, even the trade unions.

That may well be what now gives Putin and co. legitimacy, at least in their own eyes, as the rightful heirs of the vanguard party. They see themselves as representatives of its executive branch, the FSB, in direct line of succession from the KGB, the OGPU, the NKVD, and the Cheka, set up by Lenin in 1917. Even now, Putin seems determined to cling on to power: having decided who is to succeed him as President, he is going to stand for the job of Prime Minister, and seems determined to fix the outcome of the elections:

Russia sought unprecedented curbs on foreign observers of its parliamentary election on December 2nd. It wants no more than 70 monitors sent by the Organisation of Security and Co-operation in Europe, down from 465 in December 2003.

ECONOMIST (on-line version) 2 Nov 2007

Class-consciousness:-

Lenin argued that revolutionary class-consciousness could not develop in the working class:

This consciousness could only be brought to them from without. The history of all countries shows that the working class, exclusively by its own effort, is able to develop only trade-union consciousness...

WHAT IS TO BE DONE? pp 32-33

Incidentally, he was wrong. Workers in various countries had set up movements with a class-conscious, revolutionary and political agenda. The Paris Commune is one example. In Russia the Northern Union of Russian Workers was set up in 1878 by metal workers and others, without any involvement by intellectuals or professional revolutionaries, an organisation with a class-conscious, revolutionary, political programme (see Franco Venturi, *ROOTS OF REVOLUTION*, p 553).

Lenin argued that revolutionary class consciousness had to be brought to the workers by "*educated representatives of the propertied classes, the intellectuals*":

... the theoretical doctrine of Social-Democracy arose quite independently of the spontaneous growth of the labour movement; it arose as a natural and inevitable outcome of the development of ideas among the revolutionary Socialist intelligentsia.

WHAT IS TO BE DONE? p 33

Lenin asserts that the working class cannot hope to arrive at revolutionary class consciousness without the guidance of educated intellectuals: bureaucrats, historians, lawyers and the like, and especially that peculiarly useless form of pond life, the professional revolutionary, someone who was probably also a police spy.

The SPGB argues that Lenin's position was thoroughly elitist: it had absolutely nothing in common with the position of Marx and Engels who argued that: "*the emancipation of the working class must be the act of the working class itself*". Lenin's view is poles apart from Marx's which was based on the materialist conception of history, from the argument that ideas change and develop in response to changes in social and economic conditions, and that class consciousness is rooted in and arises out of class exploitation and the ongoing class struggle.

But Lenin insisted that workers' revolutionary thinking cannot come from the class struggle:

The workers can acquire class political consciousness only from without, that is, only outside of the economic struggle, outside of the sphere of relations between workers and employers.

ibid., p 76

But if this "*working class political consciousness*" cannot be acquired from the class struggle, how is it to be got?

Where can it come from? Lenin's answer is not convincing:

The sphere from which alone it is possible to obtain this knowledge is the sphere of relationships between all classes and the state and the government - the sphere of inter-relations between all classes (p 76).

So this was a leader who held that class consciousness cannot come from the class struggle; and who claimed in his

theoretical madness that this allegedly *advanced* theoretical doctrine had to be obtained from another "*sphere*" altogether, an utterly imaginary sphere of "*relationships between **all** classes and the state and the government - the sphere of inter-relations between **all** classes*".

Lenin's talk of this revolutionary consciousness coming from "*inter-relations between **all** classes*" means he had no notion of this being a proletarian class-consciousness, hence a working class social revolution. He thought only of a political revolution, a mere change of regime.

Bolshevism = Opportunism

This particular argument of Lenin's about "*inter-relations between all classes*" can be seen as a theoretical basis for his opportunistic alliance, in the 1917 revolution, with the peasants under the slogan *Peace, Land, and Bread*.

But that alliance was spurious - the slogan was misleading. The army had for months been voting with their feet about the war and heading for home, and the peasants had been seizing the land.

Bolshevism = Vanguardism

Bolshevism is above all to be seen as a method of organisation, the basic model being that of a vanguard party, an elite, leading the ignorant masses. This 'vanguard party', with its supposedly advanced theory, itself had to be led by some central leader or leadership clique.

In 1948, when the SPGB published a pamphlet, THE COMMUNIST MANIFESTO AND THE LAST 100 YEARS, the passage about the Bolshevik revolution concluded [p 36):

The dictatorship in Russia was subsequently revealed to be not the dictatorship of the workers, nor even the dictatorship of the Bolshevik party, but the dictatorship of a small clique within the Russian Communist Party that had engineered itself into power and that later split into a contest between leaders after the death of Lenin.

In this central leadership, one can see a line of succession: from Lenin and Stalin, through Khrushchev to Brezhnev and Andropov, and even Gorbachov. Although Yeltsin opened up the political and economic structures which had persisted for generations, Putin the current incumbent is restoring the old political model, as the all-powerful central leader, surrounded by a clique of trusted cronies.

Bolshevism = Dictatorship

As the SPGB noted in 1918, because Lenin's vanguard minority had seized power *as a minority*, it would only be able to hold power by force, i.e. as a dictatorship. That's the only way a minority *can* hold power unless it has mass support, which the Bolsheviks clearly did not have.

That assessment by the SPGB was right: witness for instance, the Cheka, the gulags, the purges, one-party rule, the banning of all other parties, the elimination of any form of dissent, even within the ruling party, or even of independent trade union organisation, the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly, the heavy hand of censorship, the ruthless crushing of workers' protests at Kronstadt, Novocherkassk, etc. All of this started under Lenin, with Trotsky's full support, even if later taken to greater extremes by Stalin.

Dictatorship of the Proletariat

Yet Lenin and his leftwing fellow-travellers in the West claimed that this totalitarian dictatorship was the '**Dictatorship of the Proletariat**' and, what's more, that this '**Dictatorship of the Proletariat**' was a central feature of Marxism.

As one hack wrote:

When Lenin inaugurated the Dictatorship of the Proletariat he obviously was unhampered by the slightest hesitation or doubt as to the efficacy of Marxian principles... It is probably no exaggeration to say that the greatest value of the Russian Revolution to the world Labour movement lies in the fact that it has replaced Marxism with Leninism.

Michael Farbman, OBSERVER, 27 Jan 1924,
SPGB, March 1924; see RUSSIA SINCE 1917, p 28

To which the SPGB answered: Lenin never established a Dictatorship of the Proletariat - only the Dictatorship of the Communist Party. What's more, Marx never once used that phrase in any of those of his writings that he himself saw through the press.

The failure of the Russian Revolution to achieve Socialism was due to historical facts, disregarded by Lenin and co, but very well understood by Marx and Engels, and the SPGB:

- * the lack of class consciousness;
- * a tiny Russian working class, outnumbered by a vast number of peasants opposed to any notions about common ownership;
- * and, in a worldwide capitalist system, it would be impossible to establish 'Socialism in one country', especially a country with such a backward economy.

For anyone with an understanding of the key to Marxism, the Materialist Conception of History, the November 1917 Russian revolution showed that Lenin's vanguardist theory was really only about how to effect a coup d'etat, how to seize and hold power, how to effect a political revolution - a mere change of regime. But it was not about how to establish Socialism.

The Bolsheviks clearly lacked the mass, class-conscious support of the working class. As the SPGB pointed out, Russia in 1917 was an economically backward country where the urban working class had little knowledge or understanding of Socialism, and moreover were heavily outnumbered by millions of illiterate, superstitious peasants. *[To be continued]*

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The Labour Theory of Value Before Marx

The Labour Theory of Value in its fully developed form was the work of Karl Marx but before that time many thinkers had occupied themselves with the problem of value. Aristotle, 2000 years ago, attempted to solve the problem of value but the conditions of his time prevented him from going further than understanding that there was something equal in products that were exchanged (see CAPITAL VOLUME 1, pp 65-66, Lawrence & Wishart, 1974).

Classical Political Economy

The mercantilists (1621-1776) were the first group that really grappled with the question of value. Mercantilism was the expression of interests of English commercial capitalists. The mercantile capitalists found it detrimental to their interests to have the export of precious metals forbidden. Therefore the mercantilist theories were a reflection of the capitalist ideas of the period. Advocates of mercantilism held the view that riches were really obtained by trade, buying cheap and selling dear, thus obtaining a favourable trade balance to be settled with "*treasure*". The three leading members of this school were Sir William Petty (1623-1687), Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790) and Richard Cantillon (1680-1734).

Petty was the founder of political economy. In his book, A TREATISE OF TAXES AND CONTRIBUTIONS (1667), he held that '*Natural Price*' (value) is governed by the quantity of labour required to produce a commodity but he thought that the labour required in producing precious metals like gold and silver was the real value-producing

labour. He believed that the profit of the industrial capitalist was the return for the energy he expended and that 'unpaid labour' was ground-rent and interest; these were very desirable views for the capitalists.

Benjamin Franklin, in his *ESSAY ON A MODEST ENQUIRY INTO THE NATURE AND NECESSITY OF A PAPER CURRENCY* (1729), contended that the value of all things was measured by labour but he believed that money had an extra value. He held the view that money increased in value by virtue of the fact that it saved time in the distribution of commodities. Richard Cantillon in his *ESSAY ON THE NATURE OF COMMERCE IN GENERAL* (1759), held that the value of a commodity is equal to the quantity of land and labour involved in its production. He was a forerunner of the Physiocrats.

The Physiocrats (1758-1797)

The physiocrats represented the interests of the rising French capitalists who were mainly capitalist farmers. It was the first school that made a break with the mercantilist theories of Petty and Franklin. The physiocrats held that agricultural labour alone was the sole source of riches, and that it was the landowning classes that appropriated surplus wealth in the form of rent.

The physiocrats divided society into three classes: agricultural, landowning, and sterile (manufacturing, trading and artisan). The two principle representatives of this school were Francois Quesnay (1694-1774) and A R J Turgot (1727-1781).

Francois Quesnay was the founder of this school. In his *TABLEAU ECONOMIQUE* (1759), he makes clear the process of capitalist reproduction. His example was developed by Marx in *CAPITAL* to demonstrate the process of capitalist production through to circulation and distribution, into earned income (wages) and unearned income (industrial profit, interest and rent) [see Marx's letter to Engels, 6 July 1863, in *LETTERS ON "CAPITAL"*, 1983, pp 87-91].

A R .J Turgot, in his *REFLECTIONS ON THE FORMATION AND DISTRIBUTION OF RICHES* (1774), fully developed the physiocratic viewpoint. He traced the evolution of the capitalist farmer historically. He clearly defined the worker's wages as the '*value*' of his means of subsistence. And he pointed out that commerce developed the necessity of money as a measure of value.

The Free Trade School of Smith and Ricardo

The free trade school of Adam Smith and Ricardo represented the class interests of the rising industrial capitalists, and both of them advocated free trade. They both endeavoured to analyse the basis of capitalist production but without showing, at the same time, how social relations of capitalist society were themselves produced.

Adam Smith (1723-1790), in *THE WEALTH OF NATIONS* (1776), refuted the mercantilist theory, and defined the wealth of a nation as its annual produce. Adam Smith also had a theory of classes. He divided society into three classes: '*undertakers*' (capitalists), landlords and wage workers. Smith distinguished between '*value in use*' and '*value in exchange*', and defined wages as the '*price of labour*' - determined by the cost of production of the labourer. Smith illustrated the division of labour in the making of a pin in a factory. He claimed that the '*natural price*' (value) of the commodity is the centre of gravity around which market prices fluctuate. His major failing was to confuse the price of a commodity with the price of labour power, and to imagine that prices are governed by wages, profits and rent.

David Ricardo (1772-1832) was one of the last of the classical economists. In his *ON THE PRINCIPLES OF POLITICAL ECONOMY AND TAXATION* (1817), he started out with the determination of the value of commodities by the quantity of labour embodied in them. However, Ricardo failed to solve the problem of surplus value because he did not see that the worker sold his labour power, not his labour, to the capitalist in exchange for a wage or salary. Unlike Marx, he confused surplus value with profit. Ricardo is also famous for his theory of rent which he mixed-up with his theory of value.

The Dissolution of the Ricardian School

The dissolution of the Ricardian School was accomplished by a group of political economists headed by James Mill, Malthus, McCullough and J B .Say, whom Marx derided as "*vulgar economists*" because they either went no further than investigating mere appearances or were "*hired prize-fighters*", defending the interests of the capitalist class.

The vulgar economists tried to make out that profits were a "*wage of administration*". In contrast, Marx showed that the "*remuneration*" paid to directors is a disguised form of surplus value. In the section on George Ramsey, he wrote: *... the salaries of masters stand in inverse ratio to the size of the capital. The larger the scale on which the capital operates, the more capitalist the mode of production, the more negligible is the element of industrial profit which is reducible to salary, and the more clearly appears the real character of industrial profit, namely, that it is a part of surplus gains, i.e. of surplus value, i.e., of unpaid surplus value.*

THEORIES OF SURPLUS VALUE, p 359

J S Mill (1806-1873) tried to compromise between this 'vulgar economics' and the pre-Marxian Socialism of the early 19th century. His principal works were SOME UNSETTLED QUESTIONS OF POLITICAL ECONOMY (1844) and PRINCIPLES OF POLITICAL ECONOMY (1848). Marx said of J S Mill:

On the level plain, simple mounds look like hills; and the imbecile flatness of the present bourgeoisie is to be measured by the altitude of its great intellects.

CAPITAL VOLUME 1 Ch. XVI, *Absolute and Surplus Value*, p. 485

The Ricardian 'Socialists'

The Ricardian 'Socialists' were utopians and based their 'socialist' views on Ricardo's theory of value. As labour was the source of value, then to labour should values go - an application of morality to political economy. They thought that the capitalist robbed the worker in the process of exchange by paying him less than the full value of the worker's labour. They did not see that it was *labour power and not labour* that the worker sold to the capitalist. The Ricardian Socialists also believed that the worker was "*caught*" in the process of exchange, and not in the process of production.

The four main representatives of this school were William Thompson (1785-1833), Thomas Hodgskin (1789-1849), J F Bray (1809-1895) and Karl Rodbertus (1805-1875). William Thompson wrote AN INQUIRY INTO THE PRINCIPLES OF THE DISTRIBUTION OF WEALTH (1824) and LABOUR REWARDED (1827) wherein he stated that surplus value is a forcible and unjust appropriation of the part of the wealth produced by the working class.

Thomas Hodgskin wrote LABOUR DEFENDED AGAINST THE CLAIMS OF CAPITAL (1827), in which he stressed the fact that the whole product of labour ought to belong to the worker.

J F Bray wrote LABOUR'S WRONGS AND LABOUR'S REMEDY (1839), and used vitriolic language against what he called the forcible and unjust robbery of the working class. He saw that mere government reforms would not solve the problems of the working class, but thought that the perfect society had always awaited discovery and was not a growth out of particular circumstances. Like Hodgskin and Thompson, he advocated the establishment of communistic colonies and just exchanges.

Karl Rodbertus falsely laid claim to be the founder of Scientific Socialism. He claimed that the workers' wages only represented a fractional part of what they produced. He put forward the view that 'rent' (meaning surplus value) was that portion of the commodity which workers produce over and above their wages, and which is appropriated by landlords and capitalists.

Richard Jones

Richard Jones (1790-1855) has been totally obliterated from economic history. He is noteworthy because he applied the historical method to his analysis of human society. He was not concerned with the laying down of laws for all time, like so many of his predecessors. He had the germ of the idea of the Materialist Conception of History. In AN ESSAY ON THE DISTRIBUTION OF WEALTH (1831), he showed that the capitalist form of agriculture was a historically developed form, and exists in those countries that are highly developed industrially.

He was among the first to consider and completely refute the theory of diminishing returns, stating that this was invalidated by the introduction of machinery, chemistry, and so on. He showed, furthermore, that capitalism tends to spread itself over the whole world. Some excellent observations on human society are contained in his LITERARY REMAINS.

Marx quotes him with approval in CAPITAL VOLUME 1 (*chap. XXIV, Conversion of Surplus-Value into Capital, pp 560 and 561, L&W, 1971*). In THEORIES OF SURPLUS VALUE (VOLUME III), Marx also devotes a whole chapter to an analysis and critique of Jones's writings. Marx wrote:

... Jones states quite explicitly that capital and the capitalist mode of production are to be "accepted" merely as a transitional phase in the development of social production, a phase which, if one considers the development of the productive forces of social labour, constitutes a gigantic advance on all the preceding forms, but which is by no means the end result; on the contrary, the necessity of its destruction is contained in the antagonism between "owners of accumulated wealth" and the "actual labourers" (p. 428).

Richard Jones was a successor in the chair of Political Economy at Haileybury College and was also one of the last of the classical political economists And like many political economists of the time, he was ordained into the Church of England.

This fact was not lost on Marx:

... Christianity is... the special religion of capital. In both it is only men who count. One man in the abstract is worth just as much or little as the next man. In the one case, all depends on whether or not he has faith, in the other, on whether or not he has credit. In addition, however, in the one case, predestination has to be added, and in the other case, the accident of whether or not a man is born with a silver spoon in his mouth (loc cit., pp 448-449).

It was left to Marx to develop a scientific analysis of capitalism with a valid and sound Labour Theory of Value.

NOTE: This article is drawn from a set of notes written in July 1934, in the late Comrade Hardy's papers which he handed to the SPGB for publication in a future issue of The SPGB. Hardy had followed the text in Marx's three volumes of THEORIES OF SURPLUS VALUE, using the Kautsky German edition first published between 1905 and 1910. The quotations used here are taken from the Lawrence and Wishart edition, published between 1969 and 1972.

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Blair's Dubious Legacy

After ten years of Blair's 'new' Labour government, workers are beginning to discover some of the realities of his much-vaunted achievements.

* He claimed to have achieved peace in Northern Ireland. But, after years of the so-called 'peace process', the IRA - thought responsible for many savage beatings, plus some recent murders - still terrorise Northern Ireland.

* To his party, he left a legacy of dodgy donations: the cash for peerages scandal, and a series of substantial 'proxy' donations by a property developer from the North East. Those with long memories may recall a property developer, T Dan Smith, also well in with the Labour Party in that region, who in cahoots with an architect, John Poulson, and with the help of corrupt Labour councillors, pulled off a number of dodgy property deals. Tradition or coincidence?

* Bribery and corruption, especially regarding arms deals: e.g. British Aerospace, and the Hinduja brothers.

* A housing crisis so bad that it is reported that 40% of first-time home buyers must rely on their parents to help them buy even a flat.

* And a debt crisis - from over the top mortgages, to student loans, and credit cards.

* Plus far more wars than the world really needed - but when did the world's workers really need any capitalist war? As usual, it is a case of "*Theirs not to reason why, theirs but to do and die.*"

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Boiling With Anger

Many economists and philosophers have been given the task of showing that Marx's argument in three volumes of CAPITAL is erroneous. They have all failed. When Marx threw CAPITAL "*at the heads of the bourgeoisie*", he knew they could not refute its contents. They can either discredit Marx as a person or remain silent on what he wrote, hoping that it will go away. It won't.

A recent attempt to discredit Marx's CAPITAL was made, arguing that his bad health contributed to his writing, and CAPITAL is therefore somehow flawed. In an article in the TIMES (31 October 2007), written by their health editor, Nigel Hawkes, it was argued that disease made Marx boil with anger:

The father of communism's life and attitudes were shaped by hidradentis suppurativa [a disease of the skin that leads to moodiness and a negative outlook on life], said Sam Shuster in the British Journal of Dermatology - a concept that Marx put into words as he wrote DAS KAPITAL.

The consequence, he argued, is that CAPITAL is not a scientific account of capitalism but the tortured world view of an ill man.

Obviously the TIMES'S star journalist, Lord Rees-Mogg, is deemed not to be good enough any more to comment on Marx. Instead, the TIMES has stooped to using two logical fallacies; an attack on the person rather than responding to what he wrote, and resting an argument on authority; in this case a retired professor from University of East Anglia. What are the credentials of Emeritus Professor Shuster? Did he read Marx's work? It seems he only read Marx's letters complaining of his "*carbuncles*". The professor is not sure whether Marx has the disease and even if he had, cannot show any cause between on the one hand the illness, and on the other hand the arguments and scientific exposition of class exploitation set out in CAPITAL.

Unlike academic economists, Marx was able to work out the long-term laws of motion that have determined the development of capitalism over the last one hundred years. The world we live in is accurately described by CAPITAL. But he would have boiled with anger at the way his name has been linked with the state capitalism and dictatorship of Soviet Russia, the '*collapse of communism*'.

BOOK NOTES: Dispatches for the New York Tribune:

Selected Journalism of Karl Marx (ed. James Ledbetter, Penguin, 2007). Selected articles on China, India, America, revolution and counter-revolution in Europe, British politics and society, and economics and finance. (But what of Russia?) The Chronology and Notes are sketchy, there is no Bibliography, and the editor does not show how these pieces contributed to Marx's other work. But as Ledbetter notes: "*Marx's articles remain achingly relevant in a world of outsourcing, trade disputes, wars over oil and even water, ... [etc]*".

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Thirty Pieces of Silver

The World Socialist Party (India) has decided to rejoin the World Socialist Movement, which is largely made up of members of the Clapham-based '*Socialist*' Party. This uncomradely action was undertaken by the WSP (I) in an underhand way, without without discussion with us. We only learnt of the secret discussions between the General Secretary of the Clapham-based Socialist Party and the WSP (I) when we were sent the Clapham Party's minutes.

Given that the WSP (I) left the WSM after analysing the anti-socialist actions of the Clapham-based Socialist Party, are they now going to publicly recant the contents of their manifesto which asserted that we were the only organisation in this country who acted within the Object and Declaration of Principles of the Socialist Party of Great Britain?

They rejoin a Party which in the 1980s supported the nationalist and reformist Polish Solidarity movement, and has support for (non-Socialist) democratic reform movements as a policy. We wonder if this support will be extended to cover peasant land reform petitions and protests in Bengal?

They have chosen to become part of an organisation that has unscrupulously used the capitalist State's police forces to try to have Socialists arrested and our meetings stopped, on the pretext of "*fraud*". And they join with an organisation that contemplated using violence against Socialists putting the case for Socialism.

Of course we are saddened that there will be fewer Socialists in the world as the WSP (I) drifts down the cul-de-sac of reformist politics. However, it is better to have a small but united political party of Socialists who agree with and are prepared to defend the SPGB's 1904 OBJECT AND DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES than a large but disunited, confused and unprincipled "*Movement*" of people who clearly do not.

We are not a sect. May we remind the WSP (I) that we were expelled in 1991 for talking political action in the name of The Socialist Party of Great Britain. We were forced to reconstitute the Socialist Party of Great Britain in line with the original Object and declaration of Principles. The Party has been called a sect by its political opponents from its formation, most of whom no longer exist.

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The Economist and a 'Capitalist Communist'

THE ECONOMIST is an expensive journal, which prides itself on being a voice of enlightenment. It describes itself as offering the reader:

... a severe contest between intelligence, which presses forward, and unworthy, timid ignorance obstructing our progress.

But it is hard for us to reconcile that complacent 'mission statement' with a headline, *The capitalist communist* (THE ECONOMIST, 24 November 2007, p 102), which appeared above an article discussing the confusing position of Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee, chief minister of West Bengal since 2000.

Mr Bhattacharjee's party calls itself the Communist Party of India (Marxist): it is a vanguardist and reformist party. Bhattacharjee's policy has been to encourage capital investment in West Bengal, even when this means the dispossession of peasants and small farmers, as in Nandigram where 22,000 acres of farmland were taken for the construction of petrochemical plants. The Nandigram deal aroused protests (met by violence) among Bengali leftist and reformist groups, including members of Bhattacharjee's own party, the CPI(M), and also, we believe, the associates of the Clapham-based '*Socialist*' Party. But, they, not to worry: even if Bhattacharjee has lost his own party's support, he still has the enthusiastic backing of the 'neo-liberal' London. journal, THE ECONOMIST. Even THE ECONOMIST admits to being puzzled about Mr Bhattacharjee's "*Marxist principles*" which apparently he summed up as follows: "*.. [to] protect the poorest of the poor, protect un-organised workers, protect womenfolk who have no income.*" As THE ECONOMIST's writer asks:

... how on earth does Mr Bhattacharjee reconcile his capitalism-friendly actions with his Marxist colours? He claims to remain a communist to his tobacco-stained finger-tips. Yet he admits that it is getting hard to know what that

means. *"The world is changing, communists are changing, even in China", he says. "We are learning from our mistakes."*

As far as Bhattacharjee is concerned, 'Marxism' boils down to being kind to the very poor and naively believing in Chinese 'communism'. Plus being helpful to any capitalist organisation wanting to exploit the cheap labour of West Bengal.

Wrong! The simple key to Marxist principle is a recognition of the basics of the class struggle: i.e. that the interest of the working class worldwide stands in opposition to the interest of capital; that the interests of wage-labour and capital cannot be reconciled; and that Socialism/Communism/common ownership means an end to the wages system.

NOTE Though these comments will be sent to The Economist, to try to improve their intelligence, it is unlikely that they would publish any comments from us on their ignorant misrepresentation of Marxism: they haven't done so in the past.

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Object and Declaration of Principles

Object

The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of the whole community.

Declaration of Principles

THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN HOLDS:

1. That society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (ie land, factories, railways, etc.) by the capitalist or master class, and the consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labour alone wealth is produced.
2. That in society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle, between those who possess but do not produce and those who produce but do not possess.
3. That this antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.
4. That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom, the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind without distinction of race or sex.
5. That this emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.
6. That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organise consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, national and local, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and the overthrow of privilege, aristocratic and plutocratic.

7. That as all political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interests of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.

8. The Socialist Party of Great Britain, therefore, enters the field of political action determined to wage war against all other political parties, whether alleged labour or avowedly capitalist, and calls upon the members of the working class of this country to muster under its banner to the end that a speedy termination may be wrought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labour, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.

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